

## Message Text

PAGE 01 VIENTI 05798 201330Z

45

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 AID-20 OPR-02 SY-10 ACDA-19 IO-13

DPW-01 EUR-25 NIC-01 RSR-01 /160 W

----- 130639

O P 201215Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5473

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI PRIORITY

CDR USSAG NKP PRIORITY

AMCONSUL UDORN

CONFIDENTIAL VIENTIANE 5798

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PGOV, LA

SUBJECT: ATTEMPTED COUP IN VIENTIANE: WRAP-UP

1. GENERAL THAO MA, EXILED IN BANGKOK SINCE LEADING AN ABORTIVE COUP IN 1966, TRIED AGAIN DURING EARLY MORNING AUGUST 20. MA AND FELLOW EXILEE COLONEL BOUNLEUT SAYCOCIE LEADING 20 TO 30 TROOPS CROSSED MEKONG FROM SISIENGMAY, THAILAND, BEFORE 0500, AND TOOK CONTROL OF LAO NATIONAL RADIO AND PORTIONS OF WATTAY AIRFIELD. HE WAS JOINED BY ABOUT 200 OTHERS FROM VIENTIANE AREA. MA ISSUED THREE COMMUNIQUES OVER NATIONAL RADIO SAYING THAT COUNTRY IN GRAVE CRISIS, LAO ARMED FORCES CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO HAVE SOUVANNA AS PRIME MINISTER, THE COST OF LIVING IS RISING, INSTRUCTING POPULATION AND FOREIGNERS TO REMAIN CALM, AND ORDERING ALL MILITARY, POLICE AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO REPORT TO MILITARY CAMPS IN VIENTIANE AREA BY 1200.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 05798 201330Z

2. APPROXIMATELY FOUR T-28 AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF FROM WATTAY AIRFIELD AT 0600 AND SOMETIME LATER BOMBED CHINAIMO ARMY CAMP CAUSING SOME DAMAGE, KILLING 3 (INCLUDING GEN. KOUPRASITH'S NEPHEW) AND WOUNDING 6. FOLLOWING INTIAL

FLIGHT OF T-28'S AIR FORCE COMMANDING GENERAL SOURITH  
DON SASORTIH AT 0745 ORDERED WATTAY CONTROL TOWER TO  
HOLD ALL TAKEOFFS AND LANDINGS UNLESS CLEARED BY HIM.  
ALL U.S. CONTRACTED AIRCRAFT WERE GROUNDED. C-47  
AIRCRAFT FROM SAVANNAKHET LANDED AT 0805 CARRYING  
THREE PASSENGERS, ALL REPORTEDLY FOLLOWERS OF GENERAL PHOUMI  
NOSAVAN. PARTICIPATION OF THAO MA AND BOUNLEUT, PLUS SAVANNA-  
KHET ARRIVALS, FED RUMORS THAT PHOUMI NOSAVAN HAD ORGANIZED  
COUP ATTEMPT AND WAS RETURNING VIENTIANE. THIS RUMOR  
PROVED FALSE. USAIRA OFFICERS AT WATTAY REPORTED THAT  
REBEL FORCES AT WATTAY WERE UNKNOWN TO THEM. HIGH WATER  
MARK OF INSURGENCY WAS CONTROL OF RLAF HQS, T-28 AND  
CIVILIAN RAMPS AT WATTAY AIRFIELD.

3. FAR BEGAN TO GET ORGANIZED AND REACT AROUND 0800  
AND BY 0930 SITUATION WAS BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL  
WHEN FAR TROOPS RECAPTURED ARMY MATERIAL HEADQUARTERS.  
ABOUT ONE HUNDRED FIFTY TROOPS FROM CHINAIMO  
ACCOMPANIED BY ELEMENTS FROM THE ARMORED REGIMENT RETOOK  
AIRPORT BY 11:15. T-28 FLOWN BY GENERAL MA WAS HIT  
BY GROUND FIRE, CRASHED ON LANDING, BUT MA WAS NOT SERIOUSLY  
INJURED. HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO CHINAIMO AND EXECUTED  
THERE BY A FAR OFFICER; WITH GENERAL KOUPRASITH NEARBY.  
COLONEL BOUNLEUT AND THREE OTHERS COMMANDERED RLAF  
HELICOPTER AND FLED SOUTHEAST. THEY LANDED NORTH  
OF THAKHEK WHEN HELICOPTER RAN OUT OF FUEL. UNCON-  
FIRMED REPORTS INDICATED THE GROUP CROSSED BY BOAT  
INTO THAILAND. COUP ATTEMPT ENDED IN FAILURE BY  
1200. THROUGHOUT COUP ATTEMPT THERE WAS LITTLE  
USE OF FORCE AND LITTLE SHOOTING, ONLY EXCEPTIONS  
BEING BOMBING AND SOME STRAFING DURING CHINAIMO  
ATTACK, AND FIRING AT AIRCRAFT BY GROUND FORCES.

4. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT FAR FIELD GRADE OFFICERS  
WERE INVOLVED IN OR SUPPORTED COUP ATTEMPT. SENIOR FAR  
OFFICERS, INCLUDING ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF GENERAL  
BOUNPONE MAKTHEPHARAKS, DEFENSE DELEGUE SISOUK NA  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 05798 201330Z

CHAMPASSAK, DEFENSE MINISTRY DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL  
THONGPHANH KNO SKY, CHIEF G-2 GENERAL ETAM SINGVONGSA, CHIEF  
OF STAFF PHASOUKSOMLY, AND ARMY TRAINING DIRECTOR  
VANNASANG SAYASANE SPENT MOST OF MORNING AT PHONE KHENG  
MILITARY CAMP. ARMY DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF GENERAL  
KOUPRASITH ABHAY AND REGION V COMMAND GENERAL THONGLITH  
AND GEN OUDONE SANANIKONE WERE AT CHINAIMO. DEPUTY MR V COM-  
MANDER GENERAL AT, UNDER THONGLITH'S COMMAND, LED  
TROOPS THAT CAPTURED WATTAY AND TOOK THAO MA. AIR FORCE  
COMMANDER GENERAL SOURITH DON SASORTIH WAS ALSO AT PHONE  
KHENG MOST OF MORNING. FAR LEADERSHIP APPARENTLY SUPPORTED  
PRIME MINISTER THROUGHOUT COUP ATTEMPT AS WAS EVIDENCED  
BY THEIR ACTIONS.

5. CHARGE REPORTED COUP ATTEMPT TO PRIME MINISTER AT 0645, WENT IMMEDIATELY TO LATTER'S HOME, AND OFFERED PRIME MINISTER USE OF AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, WITH ARMY ATTACHE AS ESCORT, WHICH WAS ACCEPTED. PRIME MINISTER REMAINED THERE THROUGHOUT MOST OF MORNING WHILE HE MET WITH DEFENSE DELEGUE SISOUK, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LEUAM INSISIENGMAY, MINISTER INTERIOR PHENG PHONGSAVANE, PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER NGON SANANIKONE AND OTHERS. PRIME MINISTER ALSO WAS IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH CHARGE DURING THIS TIME AND MADE USE OF USAID TELEGRAPHIC FACILITIES TO INFORM KING IN LUANG PRABANG OF SITUATION. AT 0930 ARMY PSYWAR RADIO BROADCAST PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT THAT HE REMAINED PRIME MINISTER, HAD SITUATION WELL IN HAND, AND THAT PEOPLE SHOULD REMAIN CALM.

6. ARMED FORCES THROGHOUT COUNTRY REMAINED LOYAL TO GOVERNMENT. SECOND STRIKE DIVISION COMMANDER GENERAL THAO LY IN SAVANNAKHET REPORTED REQUEST FROM GENERAL BOUPNE TO MOVE A COMPANY OF TROOPS FROM MR III TO VIENTIANE BY HELICOPTER. THAO LY ANNOUNCED HIS LOYALTY TO BOUPNE BUT COULD NOT SEND THE TROOPS BECAUSE HE LACKED SUFFICIENT AIRLIFT CAPABILITY. THE AIR FORCE COMMANDER IN MR III ALSO PLEDGED HIS LOYALTY. NO UNUSUAL MILITARY ACTIVITY WAS NOTICED IN MR I, ONLY USUAL NUMBER OF TROOPS AT KEY GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, BRIDGES AND THE RADIO STATION. GENERAL VANG PAO IN MR II STATED IN LONG TIENG THAT HE WOULD ONLY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 VIENTI 05798 201330Z

TAKE ORDERS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OR THE KING. MR IV REMAINED CALM.

7. CHARGE, AFTER INSURING SAFETY AND COMFORT OF PRIME MINISTER, MET WITH PATHET LAO DELEGATE PHOUMI VONGVICHIT. CHARGE REASSURED PHOUMI THAT U.S. STRONGLY OPPOSED MA'S ACTIONS, WOULD DO EVERYTING POSSIBLE TO HELP RLG TO ASSURE THAT IT FAILED, AND THAT U.S. SUPPORTED SOUVANNA 100 PERCENT. CHARGE BRIEFED AMBASSADOR UNGER IN BANGKOK ON SITUATION. CHARGE WENT TO PHONE KHENG ARMY CAMP AT 0810 TO SPEAK WITH GENERALS BOUPNE AND SASORITH AND MINISTER SISOUK. HE STRESSED THAT THE USG SUPPORTS THE PRIME MINISTER AND WOULD USE AVAILABLE MEANS TO HELP RLG TO INSURE THE FAILURE OF THE COUP. CHARGE AT 0840 THEN PROCEEDED TO WATTAY AIRFIELD WHERE HE FORCEFULLY TALKED DOWN THE INSURGENT TROOPS. HE POINTED OUT TO THEM THE SUICIDALNATURE OF THEIR ACTION, ITS STUPIDITY, AND THE HARM THEY WERE INFILCTING ON THEM-SELVES AND ON LAOS. THROUGHOUT THE MORNING, CHARGE MADE PERIODIC CONTACT WITH AMBASSADORS FROM JAPAN, FRANCE, USSR, THE CANADIAN ICC DELEGATE AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY. WHEN MILITARY ACTIVITY CEASED AT

1130 CHARGE RETURNED TO PATHET LAO DELEGATION WHERE  
DELEGATE PHOU MI TOLD HIM THAT IF PATHET LAO HAD DOUBTS  
ABOUT US POSITION PRIOR TO COUP ATTEMPT, IT NOW KNEW  
WHERE US STOOD IN SUPPORT OF PRIME MINISTER.

8. NO UNITED STATES CITIZENS WERE INJURED DURING THE  
MORNING'S EVENTS, NO US CITIZENS WERE INVOLVED, AND NO  
US GOVERNMENT PROPERTY WAS DAMAGED.

DEAN

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 10 MAY 1999  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 20 AUG 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973VIENTI05798  
**Document Source:** ADS  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** 11652 GDS  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Film Number:** n/a  
**From:** VIENTIANE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t19730869/abqcelpa.tel  
**Line Count:** 174  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 28 NOV 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <28-Nov-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <21-Dec-2001 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ATTEMPTED COUP IN VIENTIANE: WRAP-UP  
**TAGS:** PINS, PGOV, LA  
**To:** STATE INFO BANGKOK  
CINCPAC  
DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI  
CDR USSAG NKP  
UDORN  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

